



# News Release

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## **Washington ranks high in skin cancer**

*Cloudy and grey doesn't keep melanoma away*

**OLYMPIA** — Puget Sound, if it were a state by itself, would rank fourth in the nation for skin cancer rates. That's because of a misconception that cloudy weather means people don't have to protect themselves from the sun.

The state Department of Health advises that protecting you and your family from skin cancer is something that must be done all year, regardless of whether it's sunny or cloudy. Ultra Violet (UV) light exposure, the most preventable cause of skin cancer, occurs even on cloudy days.

Although children are rarely diagnosed with skin cancer, sunburns in childhood are associated with melanoma later in life. So, it's important to protect children from UV light and establish healthy behaviors early. Reducing exposure to UV at early ages is among the reasons for a new law that went into effect this month banning kids under 18 from using tanning beds without a written prescription from a doctor.

UV-B rays penetrate the top layers of skin and are most responsible for sunburns; UV-A rays go through the deeper layers of the skin. Both types of UV rays/light are emitted by lamps in tanning beds.

You can help prevent skin cancer by using sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher; staying in the shade, especially during midday hours; covering skin with clothing that covers your arms and legs or a hat with a wide brim to shade your face, head, ears and neck.

You can learn more important facts about skin cancer and how to prevent it on the [Washington Cares about Cancer partnership page](#) and on the Department of Health website about [comprehensive cancer control](#).

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